

# Documents on Diplomacy: Resources

## Thirteen Days After Twenty-Five Years

[http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/campdavid25/campdavid25\\_thirteendays.shtml](http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/campdavid25/campdavid25_thirteendays.shtml)

### Camp David: Historic Grounds for Peace

Twenty-five years ago in the isolation and solitude of the Catoctin Mountains of Maryland, three world leaders came together seeking a way out of the years of distrust, manipulation, war, and political posturing in the Middle East. At the invitation of U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel and President Anwar Sadat of Egypt came to the secluded presidential retreat, Camp David, hoping to find avenues to peace in their troubled part of the world. Each leader took enormous risks to be there, but the successful outcome of their meetings brought immediate worldwide attention to each one's courage and resolve.

A formula for resolving conflict evolved during the Camp David meetings. President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin expressed a new willingness to attempt resolution of the conflict, while U.S. President Jimmy Carter offered to serve as a mediator. He also suggested Camp David, the private presidential retreat, as a setting conducive to these meetings without the disruption of the press. When it became clear that both sides were holding to predictable statements and worn arguments, President Carter developed his own strategy of getting agreement in bite-size portions—first from one side and then from the other. Back and forth, idea and detail, getting consensus on certain parts, outlining what still needed work, Carter convinced Begin and Sadat to stay for thirteen days until they developed and agreed upon a framework for peace.

### Ancient Land, Age-Old Struggles

By 1978 the Middle East had been a region of the world embroiled in tragic conflict for centuries. The United States had been involved in efforts to ease tensions in the Middle East, in large part to avert the possibility of a world war. Because

of the complex political and governmental relationships between the peoples and countries of the Middle East and the European colonial powers, this region had become one of the world's powder kegs.

In 1869, the French-built Suez Canal opened in Egypt. The Canal opened up new sources of trade for Middle Eastern countries, but gave the French and then the British a major foothold in the area. In 1917, the British Balfour Declaration stated that the Jewish people should have a homeland in Palestine, the land of their origins. When the Arab countries learned of this they protested against it, but England promised that the civil and religious status of the Arabs in Palestine would not change. In 1922 the League of Nations placed Palestine under the Mandate system, in which England was to govern the territory. After World War II, many Jewish people migrated to Palestine, seeking a homeland after the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust. However, neighboring Arab countries watched in resentment as the British allowed Palestinian Arabs to be displaced from their homes and from the areas they had cultivated for generations.

The growing Jewish population in Palestine viewed the British as an occupying force. Jewish terrorist attacks against British facilities in Palestine prompted a withdrawal by the British. In 1947, the United Nations divided the area into three parts: a Jewish state, an Arab state, and an international zone around Jerusalem. The Jewish people living in Palestine declared the formation of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948. Israel was officially recognized by the United States and the Soviet Union. Within twenty-four hours Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq issued a protest and invaded this newly formed country. In 1949, an armistice was signed which changed the boundaries laid out in the 1947 proposal.

In 1956, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser and his vice-president Anwar Sadat nationalized the Suez Canal, thus depriving the British and French of revenues they had enjoyed for nearly one hundred years. The British, French, and Israelis attacked Egypt to reclaim

the Canal by force. The international community called for an end to this effort, and the British, French, and Israeli troops withdrew. Because of this successful stand against colonial power, Egypt was recognized as a leader among Middle Eastern countries.

In the Six Day War of June 1967, Israel preempted an anticipated attack by Egypt, Syria, and Jordan by launching a ground and air strike through the Sinai region of Egypt, the Golan Heights of Syria, and beyond the West Bank of the Jordan River in Jordan. The territory that Israel gained in this war established new northern, southern, and eastern borders for the country, but this territory would also be the focus of Middle Eastern dispute for years to come. Later in 1967, United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 called for a withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict, for recognition of every state in the region, for free navigation through international waterways, for a just settlement of the Palestinian refugee problem, and for established demilitarized zones. Diplomatic efforts failed when Israel did not withdraw and when Arab countries began relationships with the Soviet Union that brought them modern military weapons.

On October 6, 1973, the Egyptian army launched a successful surprise attack against Israeli forces in the Suez Canal and Sinai Desert area of Egypt. Simultaneously, Syrian forces attacked Israeli troops in the Golan Heights in an effort to reclaim territory. During this conflict, also known as the Yom Kippur War, the United States provided immediate military assistance to Israel in its counterattack, ensuring the defeat of Arab forces. In concert with this strike, the oil-producing Arab countries announced a 25% reduction in oil exports, hoping to bring pressure on western nations supporting Israel. On October 22, 1973, United Nations Security Council Resolution 338 called for a cease-fire and for immediate negotiations. A year later, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) proclaimed that it was the only legitimate representative for the Palestinian people.

President Johnson and President Nixon made diplomatic efforts to solve the recurring conflicts in the region. President Ford's Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, personally intervened to settle the tensions in the region. The Sinai Agreement of 1975, which Kissinger negotiated, called for an end to any fighting between Israel and Egypt. It also outlined a buffer zone with United Nations peacekeeping forces, but it did not resolve many of the underlying issues of the conflict.

When new Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin extended an unprecedented invitation to Egypt's President Sadat to come to Jerusalem in 1977, the world took notice. Sadat's trip to Jerusalem and Prime Minister Begin's subsequent visit to Egypt showed a clear desire to move past disagreement and doubt toward peaceful resolution.

### Anwar Sadat

President of Egypt Mohammed Anwar el Sadat grew up in a small village north of Cairo. He attended a British military school in Egypt even though he deeply resented British rule of his country. After graduation, Sadat met Gamal Abdel Nasser. They formed a revolutionary group composed of military officers, the Free Officers Organization, that committed itself to overthrowing British rule. Anwar Sadat was imprisoned twice for revolutionary activities, but on July 23, 1952, the Free Officers Organization deposed King Farouk, the British puppet monarch. Sadat served as Nasser's right-hand man and personally supervised the King's abdication. When Nasser became President of Egypt, Sadat served as vice-president until Nasser's death in 1970.

Upon assuming the presidency, Sadat was faced with severe domestic problems caused by the growing failure of socialism, the economic drain of the Six Day War, and the constant prospect of more war in the future. Finding the Soviet Union an unreliable ally, he worked toward a better relationship with the United States and Western Europe.

In a series of daring gestures, he charted a new course for Egypt. He expelled Soviet advisors from Egypt and began to reform the economy. On October 6, 1973, he launched a surprise attack against Israeli forces in the Sinai

in order to reclaim this Egyptian peninsula captured during the 1967 Six Day War. Even though the military strike was only initially successful, it was a psychological victory and Sadat became known as "The Hero of the Crossing." In spite of new western investment and U.S. aid, the economy continued to decline, resulting in work strikes and riots over food shortages. Sadat, convinced that war was too costly for his people, took a grand and unprecedented step onto the world stage. He traveled to Jerusalem at the invitation of Prime Minister Begin and addressed the Israeli Knesset (parliament) on November 20, 1977, calling for peace in the Middle East.

### Menachem Begin

Menachem Wolfovitch Begin grew up in Brest-Litovsk, Poland. Greatly influenced by the ideas of Zeev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky, he joined the Betar Zionist movement in Poland. By 1935, he had earned a law degree from the University of Warsaw and became the leader of Betar. This political organization encouraged young people of Jewish ancestry to embrace their heritage, learn Hebrew, and return to the land of Palestine to establish a homeland—"Eretz Yisrael."

When the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, Begin left for the Soviet Union. He later discovered that his parents and brother had been killed during the Holocaust. He was arrested in the Soviet Union, charged with espionage, and sentenced to a prison camp in Siberia. In 1941, he was released because he was a Polish citizen. He joined the Free Polish Army and then served in the British Army in Palestine as an interpreter. During this time, he became active in the illegal immigration of Jews to Palestine and became a leader of Irgun Zvai Leumi—a liberation movement dedicated to overthrowing British rule. After Irgun blew up a wing of the King David Hotel—the British headquarters in Jerusalem—Begin was listed on the British "most wanted" register.

After British withdrawal from Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel, Begin became the leader of the Herut Party, an opposition party in the Israeli Knesset. In 1967, he joined the National Unity government. In 1970, he became the joint chairman of the Likud (unity) coalition. Because of economic

scandal and disagreements within the majority Labor Party, the Likud bloc won a 1977 election victory, and Begin became Israel's sixth Prime Minister.

A skilled orator and debater, Begin was the first Israeli Prime Minister to refer to the West Bank region of the Jordan River by the Biblical names, Judea and Samaria. The Likud campaign platform had insisted on the rights of Jews to settle in any part of their occupied territories. It also called for negotiating a comprehensive framework for peace in the region rather than a step-by-step approach.

After Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November 1977, Prime Minister Begin in turn made a historic visit to Ismailia, a small town along the Suez Canal zone, on December 25. He was the first Israeli prime minister to set foot in Egypt.

### Breaking Ground

Because of the volatile nature of events in the Middle East, U.S. presidents from Truman through Nixon each had to address a regional crisis sometime during his term of office. With the Soviet Union as a major player, each president had to face the possibility of a world war. The cycle of bombings and retaliations, border skirmishes, instability, and general uneasiness could lead to full-scale military confrontation at any time. President Carter wanted to prevent such a crisis instead of reacting to it. He sensed that the time was right to intervene personally. He recognized in Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat two men that were deeply religious and held a sense of destiny about their lives. Carter referred to Sadat as "a modern-day pharaoh" and to Begin as a leader "charged with the future of God's chosen people." In an unprecedented move, he invited new Prime Minister Menachem Begin and President Anwar Sadat to Camp David to meet privately with him, two leaders that he believed could make crucial decisions.

By July 1978, President Carter had met both Sadat and Begin as well as the other Middle East heads of state. Carter was well-acquainted with the history of the region, the issues of disagreement, the different points of view, and U.S. policy concerns, but he recognized in

these two men a genuine desire to resolve the problems of their part of the world. As a student of the Bible, well-versed in the ancient struggles of this part of the world, Carter approached both leaders with political understanding and a unique sense of purpose. In preparation for the Camp David meetings, Carter studied briefing materials, including detailed maps and complete profiles of Sadat and Begin and their close advisors. President Carter's strategy was to limit the place and time of these face-to-face negotiations and to involve only those who had the authority to make agreements. He hoped that his personal intervention would serve as a catalyst for the negotiations by pointing to new approaches and reminding them of the advantages of peace.

*Delegation representing Egypt:*

- Anwar el-Sadat, President
- Mohamed Ibrahim Kamel, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Boutros Ghali, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs
- Osama el-Baz, Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs
- Ashraf Ghorbal, Ambassador to the United States
- Ahmed Maher, Director of the Foreign Minister's Cabinet
- Abdul Raul el-Reedy, Director of Policy Planning, Foreign Ministry
- Nabil el-Araby, Legal Director of the Foreign Ministry
- Ahmed Abou el-Gheite, Office of the Foreign Minister

*Delegation representing Israel:*

- Menachem Begin, Prime Minister
- Moshe Dayan, Foreign Minister
- Ezer Weizman, Defense Minister
- Aharon Barak, Attorney General and Member-designate of the Supreme Court
- Avraham Tamir, Major General, Director of Army Planning Branch
- Simcha Dinitz, Ambassador to the United States
- Meir Rosenne, Legal Advisor to the Foreign Minister

- Elyakim Rubenstein, Assistant Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Dan Patti, Public Affairs Advisor to the Prime Minister

*Delegation representing U.S.:*

- Jimmy Carter, President
- Walter Mondale, Vice President
- Cyrus Vance, Secretary of State
- Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Advisor
- Hamilton Jordan, Chief of Staff
- Jody Powell, Press Secretary
- Harold Saunders, Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs
- Alfred Atherton, Ambassador at Large
- Hermann Eilts, Ambassador to Egypt
- Samuel Lewis, Ambassador to Israel
- William Quandt, Staff of National Security Council

### **Preparing for the Press**

President Carter insisted that there be no direct press coverage of these meetings. He feared that if President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin had to tailor each statement to meet public opinion, they would not be completely open and honest in the discussions. Instead, Carter and the White House staff determined that this insulation from the press would allow the delegations to work out ideas and language without the pressure of daily progress or the fear of being misquoted.

Because of the high level and visibility of such a meeting, White House Press Secretary Jody Powell and Communications Advisor Jerry Rafshoon were flooded with requests from the media to cover this event. White House staff made extensive preparations for members of the press from all over the world.

### **September 6**

- "Habemus Pacem" -Begin  
"I hope the spirit of King David will prevail at Camp David" -Sadat

Sadat and Begin met the Carters outside Aspen, the President's cabin, before their first meeting. Mrs. Carter wrote later:

"Jimmy and I went on into our cabin and then an interesting moment—Begin and Sadat both hesitating over who should enter first. Then they both laughed and Begin insisted that Sadat

enter first. We had watched, as had a handful of people outside, and Jimmy said to me that Begin would never go ahead of Sadat, being perfectly proper according to protocol—President above Prime Minister."

Later in the day, the three men used the patio outside Aspen for further discussions. They talked about three issues: 1) the Sinai peninsula between Egypt and Israel, 2) the ownership of the West Bank and Gaza areas bordering Israel, and 3) the role that Palestinian people would have in governing themselves.

All the parties had arrived on Tuesday, September 5 with high expectations. They asked the world to pray that peace could be achieved through these meetings. Jimmy Carter knew this venture would only work if he could convince these men to trust him. Not only did he have to listen carefully to what was said during these meetings, but the President also had to notice the unspoken word or phrase and read each face and gesture.

### **September 7**

"Sinai settlements must stay!" -Begin  
"Security yes! Land no!" -Sadat

The discussions between Sadat and Begin escalated into heated arguments, while Carter tried to referee. One of the central debates focused on Israeli settlements in the Sinai region. Sadat insisted they be removed, and Begin claimed that dismantling them would mean the fall of his government.

Mrs. Carter recorded the following:

"When the meeting was over at 1:30, Jimmy dictated his notes about the session and then met with Cy [Vance] and Zbig [Brzezinski]. I sat in. He said the meeting was mean. I had heard raised voices from the bedroom where I was working. They were brutal with each other, personal, and he had had to break into arguments at certain points. He said that he made notes, looking down at his pad so they would have to talk with each other instead of to him. Sometimes when their words became too heated he had to break in."

Later that evening, all the delegations, the press, the Camp David staff and their families,

and the three principals gathered for the performance of a Marine Evening Dress Parade. Two companies of Marines and the Marine Drum and Bugle Corps performed on the grounds of Camp David. A serious and somber mood covered the camp during the ten-minute "silent drill"—a precision rifle drill with no verbal commands.

Jimmy Carter's notes from the afternoon meeting outlined questions and deep differences between the two leaders.

"Sadat announced angrily that a stalemate had been reached. He saw no reason for the discussions to continue. [Begin and Sadat] were moving toward the door, but I got in front of them to partially block the way. I urged them not to break off their talks. . . . Begin agreed. . . . Sadat nodded his head. They left without speaking to each other."—Jimmy Carter from *Keeping Faith*

#### **September 8**

"The atmosphere between the two of you is not conducive to any agreement."—Carter

Because Sadat and Begin were no longer on speaking terms, President Carter decided that he would act as the go-between, hashing out proposals with one leader and then the other. The U.S. negotiating team also met separately with the Israeli and Egyptian teams.

That evening, the Israeli delegation played host to the Americans at a Friday evening dinner to observe the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath. The meal preparations at Camp David were complicated because the staff had to accommodate Jewish and Moslem dietary laws. The Aspen cabin kitchen became "command central" for the regular Camp David cooks, President Sadat's personal chef, and for the Jewish kosher cooks. In fact, a separate section of the kitchen was designated to prepare the kosher food and was equipped with utensils that were exclusively used for these dishes.

Religious observances were important in the scheduling during these meetings. President Sadat used the camp movie theater for private prayer on Friday; the Carters used the same space as a chapel for Sunday services; and Prime Minister Begin requested that no meetings be set for Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath.

Mrs. Carter noted the following:

"Everybody at the dinner was in a very good mood. I think because it was the Sabbath. Begin told me they always observed the Sabbath with rejoicing and singing because the Bible said that you cannot serve God with sadness. They all sang during dinner, and laughed, and it was a good evening."

#### **September 10**

Because the atmosphere at Camp David was becoming claustrophobic, President Carter asked his staff to plan an excursion to nearby Gettysburg National Military Park for a change of scenery and a reminder of the need for peace.

"Sadat, not surprisingly, was very interested in our Civil War. He knew much of the history of the area. . . . and recalled the details of the battle. Begin, an admirer of Abraham Lincoln, recited the Gettysburg address to us. . ."—Rosalynn Carter from *First Lady from Plains*

In the evening, members of the American delegation went over some new proposals with members of the Israeli delegation. They met from nine-thirty at night to three in the morning—five and one-half hours—agonizing over key words and phrases and arguing about their meanings.

#### **September 12**

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."—Begin

The discussions among the delegations continued, but Sadat and Begin met separately with Carter. Both men talked openly and honestly with Carter. Both still had serious concerns and became emotional about the status of the city of Jerusalem.

Land, always the source of Middle East conflict, remained the major sticking point. After Carter realized that agreement might hinge on the status of the Sinai peninsula, he decided to draft a proposal—"Framework for a Settlement in the Sinai."

"I decided to work that afternoon on the terms for an Egyptian-Israeli treaty, and spread the Sinai maps out on the dining table to begin this task, writing the proposed agreement on

a yellow scratch pad."—Jimmy Carter from *Keeping Faith*

President Carter noted a passionate appeal from Begin. He told Carter that this was the most serious conversation he had had since he discussed the future of Israel with his mentor Zeev Jabotinsky.

#### **September 13**

Determined to reach agreement on a framework for peace, Carter and Vance spent eleven hours with Aharon Barak from Israel and Osama el-Baz from Egypt to work out the detailed language of the framework proposal. As they hammered out the language of each phrase, both Barak and el-Baz demonstrated their astute legal minds and their excellent knowledge of English. When differences in language stopped progress, President Carter suggested that "West Bank" be used in the English and Arabic texts, while "Judea and Samaria" be used in the Hebrew version; "Palestinians" in the English and Arabic, yet "Palestinian Arabs" in the Hebrew. He would explain the change in a letter to Begin. The letter would be attached to any formal agreement they would reach. The letter exchange idea became a critical factor in making progress toward agreement.

Because of the news blackout, many outside Camp David assumed that an agreement had already been reached. Even the Camp David staff had expected that after a few days of "ceremonial" meetings, the three leaders would announce success and leave. Instead, the camp staff was stretched to its limit trying to provide for the needs of all the participants.

#### **September 15**

"We can go no further."—Carter  
"I am leaving."—Sadat

President Sadat could not agree to leave Israeli settlements and airfields in the Sinai peninsula, and Prime Minister Begin could not agree to remove these settlements. Without agreement on these issues, there did not appear to be any way to continue. Carter had already told the delegations that Sunday, September 17, would be the last day of the meetings. He had requested that all the delegations work on a joint

statement about the meetings, emphasizing the positive accomplishments.

Upset by a meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Dayan, President Sadat suddenly called for a helicopter and announced to Vance that he was leaving. Carter, fearful of such an abrupt end to the meetings, rushed over to Sadat's cabin for a highly personal and dramatic encounter in which he convinced Sadat to stay.

"I explained to [Sadat] the extremely serious consequences . . . that his action would harm the relationship between Egypt and the United States, he would be violating his personal promise to me . . . [and] damage one of my most precious possessions-- his friendship and our mutual trust." —Jimmy Carter from *Keeping Faith*

#### **September 16**

"Ultimatum, Excessive Demands, Suicide" — Begin

Even though the progress of the talks was faltering, Carter's determination to reach agreement remained strong. In another negotiating session with Begin, Barak, and Dayan, Carter and Vance made a case for peace, going through the Sinai framework and the Framework for Peace line by line.

Carter explained to Begin that Sadat would not continue negotiations toward a peace treaty until the Israeli settlements in the Sinai region were removed. After a storm of protest, Begin finally agreed to submit the question of settlements to the Israeli Knesset for a decision—If any agreement is reached on all other Sinai issues, will all the settlers be withdrawn? He even promised to allow each Knesset and Cabinet member to vote individually, without the requirements of political party loyalty. This was acceptable to Sadat!

Carter explained to Sadat that Begin would not allow the phrase "inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by war" to be part of the Framework for Peace. [1967 U.N. Resolution 242, which contains this phrase, is to be found in the annex of the Framework. Begin claimed that it did not apply to Israel because the 1967

War was a defensive war for his country.] Begin insisted that only permanent residents of the West Bank and Gaza areas, not all Palestinians, participate in future peace negotiations. Sadat agreed to write one letter defining Egypt's role in these negotiations and one letter stating his position on an undivided Jerusalem. This was acceptable to Begin!

All through the meetings, Carter continued to remind Sadat and Begin how much each had to gain in making peace.

#### **September 17**

" . . . a significant achievement in the cause of peace . . ." —Carter

The last day developed into a flurry of writing and re-writing final versions of the agreements. Because both Begin and Sadat were dissatisfied with the paragraph on Jerusalem, it was deleted from the Framework.

When Begin read the U.S. letter on the status of Jerusalem, he strongly objected to it and threatened not to sign any agreement. At another moment of crisis, Carter changed the letter by dropping the objectionable language and instead referred to statements made by American U.N. ambassadors about Jerusalem.

"I handed [Begin] the photographs. . . . [He] looked at each photograph individually, repeating the name of the grandchild I had written on it. His lips trembled, and tears welled up in his eyes. He told me a little about each child. . . . We were both emotional as we talked quietly for a few minutes about grandchildren and about war. . . . He said, 'I will accept the letter you have drafted on Jerusalem.'" —Jimmy Carter from *Keeping Faith*

After one more round with Begin on the motion he would submit for a vote by the Israeli Knesset, the delegations finally have two agreements that their leaders could sign—A Framework for Peace in the Middle East and Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel. They returned to Washington for the official signing ceremony of the Camp David Accords.

Three scheduled days at Camp David turned into thirteen intensely frustrating ones. When the three-way negotiations began on

Wednesday, September 6, 1978, Carter found both Sadat and Begin clinging to old arguments and repetitious statements. After two days, despite some amicable moments, President Carter felt that more progress could be made if they did not meet directly. He spent much of his time listening intently to heated arguments and realized that a whole new approach was needed. By Saturday, September 9, Carter worked with a team led by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski to draft an American proposal. President Carter implemented a "single text" strategy. The draft incorporated the needs and requirements of both sides. Then he took this draft separately to each party for points of agreement and disagreement. After twenty-three drafts and continuous debates on wording, the U.S. delegation came up with a final framework agreement on Sunday, September 17, that the Egyptians and the Israelis could agree on. The points of disagreement were left out of this framework and instead were written in letters to each other. Resulting in the comprehensive Camp David Accords, these meetings laid the groundwork for further negotiations, and for the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty.

#### **From Dividing Wounds to Binding Words**

On September 17, 1978, the Camp David Accords were signed. These documents established A Framework for Peace in the Middle East and a Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty Between Egypt and Israel. Within the outline of these agreements, the two signatory countries would work out other issues leading to a peace treaty and later would involve other neighboring countries. The following day, President Carter addressed a joint session of Congress to explain the agreements and to reiterate active U.S. support for a continuing peace process. The three leaders received hearty congratulations for their boldness as the world watched to see what would happen after the Camp David meetings.

Mrs. Carter wrote in her notes that Prime Minister Begin turned to his wife and said, "Mama, we'll go down in the history books!"

Two days after the Camp David Accords were signed, President Carter went to Capitol Hill to formally address Congress. Mrs. Carter recalled the following:

“...in the car he [Jimmy] asked how ‘Blessed are the peacemakers’ ended, and I said ‘for they shall inherit the earth.’ He said no, I think it is ‘for they shall be called the children of God’—and he was right.”

President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin sat in the gallery with the Carter family during the Address to Congress.

Ten days later, the Israeli Knesset voted on the Camp David Accords. After much debate on the issue of dismantling settlements in the Sinai, the Knesset approved by a vote of 84 to 19, with 17 abstentions. Secretary of State

Vance, National Security Advisor Brzezinski, and Secretary of Defense Brown spent the next months traveling and meeting not only with Israeli and Egyptian leaders but also with leaders of the other Arab countries. President Sadat faced heavy criticism from Arab leaders, and Prime Minister Begin had to answer opposing factions within Israel. Even though Egypt and Israel wanted a peace treaty and had an outline for preparing one, they again needed the United States to negotiate the agreement.

Begin and Sadat had said that there would be a treaty at the end of 1978. By March of 1979, there was still no progress. Once again, President Carter decided that he would intervene in a dramatic way by personally visiting Egypt and Israel. As he did at Camp David, Carter again reminded Sadat and Begin of what peace would mean to the people of the Middle East. After

seven days, they agreed on a schedule for Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai, a promise that Israel could access oil from Sinai oilfields, and timing for the exchange of Egyptian and Israeli ambassadors.

On March 26, 1979, the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty was signed with a grand ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House. The desire for peace had won the day. The search for peace continues today in the Middle East, yet the discussions held in Camp David cabins twenty-five years ago laid a new, strong and hopeful foundation for future efforts. ■